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Community Services Policy Manual	SUBJECT: INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES and ALLOWABLE EMERGENCY SERVICES LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: CRISIS ASSISTANCE		EFFECTIVE DATE 04/01/03 ISSUE DATE 04/01/03

REFERENCES: Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program: Crisis Assistance (LCA) Agreement

BACKGROUND:

The LCA Agreement, Section II.C.1., states that an applicant will be considered eligible whose family income is at or below 150 percent of the poverty line as established by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and published in the Community Services Policy Manual.

POLICY:

Automatic Income Eligibility

A household is automatically income-eligible for LCA funds in the following instances:

- The local FIA office has determined the household to be income-eligible for the SER program in the last 30 days.
- The household currently receives Family Independence Program (FIP) assistance.

The agency must include documentation supporting the automatic income eligibility in the client file.

Income Eligibility Determination

The LCA income maximum is 150 percent of poverty. (See chart below.) Income eligibility is based on the total amount of household income expected to be received in the next 30 days. The 30-day period includes the date of application.

INCOME GUIDELINES

<u>Members in Household</u>	<u>30-Day Maximum</u>
1	\$1122
2	1515
3	1908
4	2300
5	2693
6	3085
7	3478
8	3870
For each additional member, add: \$393	

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Income refers to total cash receipts before taxes from all sources and for all household members. Exceptions are listed in the "Income Excludes" section that follows. The income guidelines are applicable to both farm and non-farm families.

Income Includes:

1. Money, wages and salaries before any deductions.
2. Net receipts from non-farm or farm or farm self-employment (receipts from a person's own business or from an owned or rented farm after deductions for business or farm expenses).
3. Regular payments from the Social Security Administration (gross benefits), railroad retirement, unemployment compensation, strike benefits from union funds, worker's compensation, veteran's payments, public assistance (including Family Independence Program-FIP, Supplemental Security Income-SSI, and State Disability Assistance-SDA), training stipends, alimony, child support, and military family allotments.
4. Private pensions, government employee pensions (including military retirement pay), and regular insurance or annuity payments.
5. College or university scholarships, grants, fellowships and assistantships.
6. Dividends, interest, net rental income, net royalties, periodic receipts from estates or trusts, and net gambling or lottery winnings.
7. Any lump sum payments received by Native Americans, such as from Casino income or tribal income.

Income Excludes:

Income does not include:

1. Capital gains.
2. Any assets drawn down as withdrawals from a bank, the sale of property, a house, or a car.
3. Tax refunds, gifts, loans, lump sum inheritances, one time insurance payments, or compensation for injury.
4. Non-cash benefits such as the employer paid or union paid portion of health insurance or other employee fringe benefits, food or housing received in lieu of wages, the value of food and fuel produced and consumed on farms, the imputed value of rent from owner-occupied non-farm or farm housing, and federal non-cash benefit programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps (as well as cash received in lieu of food stamps), school lunches, and housing assistance.

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5. Any portion of Social Security benefits deducted to pay Medicare premiums that will not be reimbursed.
6. Income earned through employment by a child who is age 18 and under, **and** attends school. **NOTE:** "Earnings" do not include program benefits such as Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, etc.; these **are** included in the total household income.

INCOME COMPUTATIONS

Establish the LCA income computation period and determine the household's countable income for the period.

Computation Period: The LCA income computation period is 30 days in the future. The 30 day period begins the date the agency receives a signed application for emergency assistance.

EXAMPLE 1: On March 16 the client signs an application at the agency requesting emergency utility assistance. The income computation period is March 16 through April 14. (March has 31 days.)

EXAMPLE 2: On August 15 the outreach worker interviews the client in the client's home and receives a signed emergency assistance application. The income computation period is August 15 through September 14.

Countable Income: Verify and determine all non-excluded income the household expects to receive during the income computation period.

DOCUMENTATION OF INCOME

Projected income must be thoroughly documented. The following items are acceptable documentation:

- Copies of paychecks or pay stubs;
- Written statements from employers;
- Letters or other documents from income sources (e.g. FIA, Social Security, VA), if dated within the last 60 days;
- Unemployment Compensation Benefit check stubs;
- If self-employed, accounting and other business records showing net income;
- Self-declaration of applicant, but only as a last resort;
- Other documents the program operator has reason to believe will verify the projected income of the household member(s).

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Note: Agencies **CANNOT** require that a household be denied assistance by the FIA local office or any other service provider as a condition of eligibility.

RESOLVING THE EMERGENCY

It is the intent of this program that payments are made only if they resolve the household's emergency. Payment should be authorized only when the payment will restore or continue the household's heat or utility service for at least 30 days.

CLIENT FILE

Agencies must maintain a client file for all recipients of LCA funds. At a minimum, the file must include:

- **For All Households Served:**

It is the intent that payments made by the CAA will resolve the client emergency. The client file must include an explanation of how this is accomplished. Refer to the following examples for the types of explanations required:

Example #1:

The client has a shut-off notice showing an amount owed of \$500. The CAA has a shut off payment limit of \$250. The client can pay \$100. Another local agency will pay the additional \$150.

The client file must include a note that explains how the \$500 amount was paid.

Example #2:

The client has had the electric service shut off. The CAA is working with the local utility provider to reinstate service. The client has a bill totaling \$1250. The utility company agrees to reinstate service if \$500 is paid immediately and the client agrees to a payment plan for the additional \$750 owed. The \$750 is to be paid at \$50 each month over the next 15 months.

The client file must include the amount the CAA paid toward the shut-off, the amount the utility company agreed to accept on a payment plan, the specifics of the plan, e.g. the client will pay \$50 per month for the next 15 months. The file must also include confirmation from the client that he/she has the ability to meet these payments.

- **For Automatically Income-Eligible Households:**

1. A copy of the agency's client services application. The client and the intake worker must sign the application.
2. A copy of the FIA-1419, Decision Notice, State Emergency Relief (SER) and Energy Programs that indicates the household was determined SER income

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eligible within the last 30 days. This notice may indicate that the client was approved or denied SER services. If denied, the notice must indicate that the household was determined SER income eligible and denied due to other program eligibility factors; e.g. excess assets, did not meet required payments, non-affordability, etc. **OR** in lieu of the copy of the FIA-1419, agency staff may document phone confirmation with FIA staff that verifies the household was determined SER income eligible within the last 30 days; or

Documentation from FIA that the applicant is currently receiving FIP.

3. The type and dollar value of the benefits provided.
4. Demonstration of Need (See Attachment A).

- **For all other households:**

1. A copy of the agency's client services application. The application must identify each member of the household as well as income sources and amounts for each member of the household being served. The client and the intake worker must sign the application.
2. A copy of all documents used to determine income eligibility; including self-declarations and documented phone conversations with caseworkers.
3. **All** calculations for each income source for the next 30 days.
4. The type and dollar value of the benefits provided.
5. Demonstration of Need (See Attachment A).

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Community Services Policy Manual	SUBJECT Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program: Crisis Assistance PROGRAMMATIC and NARRATIVE REPORTING		EFFECTIVE DATE 04/01/03 ISSUE DATE 04/01/03

ISSUANCES AFFECTED:

REFERENCES Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program: Crisis Assistance (LCA) Agreement

BACKGROUND:

LCA Agreement, Section II, F, requires the submission of programmatic reports.

POLICY:

The Grantee is required to complete and submit the LCA Programmatic and Narrative Report, FIA-76, by the dates listed below. See Item 202 for the form.

Instructions

Section I (Completed quarterly) - The grantee will indicate the total number of households served and expenditures by type of service.

Section II (Completed after the program end date, due October 15) - The grantee will indicate any significant problem(s) encountered and how the problem was resolved. The grantee will report significant accomplishments and how they were achieved. The grantee will provide recommendations to improve this program and ideas for future projects.

The Grantee will submit reports July 15 for period April 1 – June 30, and October 15 for the period July 1 – September 30. One original and two copies will be submitted to:

Family Independence Agency
 Community Services and Special Projects
 Grand Tower, Suite 1314
 P.O. Box 30037
 235 South Grand Avenue
 Lansing, Michigan 48909